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Nation gripped by conflicting testimony

Kavanaugh denies Ford's accusations in Senate showdown

Melina Mara/Getty Images

Michael Reynolds/Associated Press

Christine Blasey Ford and Supreme Court nominee Brett Kavanaugh testify during a high-stakes day of hearings Thursday before the Senate Judiciary Committee. Ms. Ford has accused Judge Kavanaugh of sexual assault while both were in high school in the early 1980s.

The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — In an extraordinary and highly emotional day of Senate testimony, California psychology professor Christine Blasey Ford quietly recounted her "100 percent" certainty Thursday that Supreme Court nominee Brett Kavanaugh had sexually assaulted her when they were teenagers. He angrily declared he was "100 percent certain" he did no such thing.

They both said the event and the public controversy that has erupted 36 years later had altered their lives forever and for the worse — perhaps the only thing they agreed on during a long day of testimony that was a study in contrasts of tone as well as substance.

The hearing was a stunning public airing of a partisan fight, and charged with explosive gender politics. The future of a high court, and potentially control of Congress, hangs in the balance.

Senators were left to decide whether the long day tipped their confirmation votes for or against President Donald Trump's nominee.

Coming forward publicly for the first time, Ms. Ford quietly told the nation and the Senate Judiciary Committee her long-held secret of the alleged assault in a locked room at a gathering of friends when she was just 15. The memory — and now-Judge Kavanaugh's laughter during the act — was "locked" in her brain, she said: "100 percent." Hours later, Judge Kavanaugh angrily denied it, alternating a loud, defiant tone with near tears as he addressed the Senate Judiciary Committee.

"You have replaced 'advise and consent' with 'search and destroy,'" he said, referring to the Constitution's charge to senators' duties in confirming high officials.

What happens next may hinge on what Mr. Trump and his Republican allies think about the display in what could become a defining moment for a party that has struggled to retain female voters. The

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AG Shapiro says report will change state laws

Catholic sex abuse investigation netted few prosecutions

By Peter Smith
Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

When a Pennsylvania grand jury uncovered allegations of sexual abuse against more than 300 Catholic priests across the state, prosecutors reviewed the cases of the priests still living and "ran each one through a statute of limitations test," state Attorney General Josh Shapiro said Thursday.

The end result: Only two involved incidents recent enough that they could be prosecuted. One pleaded guilty, the other's case is pending.

At the same time, prosecutors ran a similar test for every bishop or other church official who was allegedly involved in covering up abuse. But Mr. Shapiro — whose office did secure misdemeanor convictions of two Franciscan superiors of an abusive friar for endangering the welfare of children in a separate probe earlier this year— said that in this investigation, everyone's actions took place too long ago to prosecute.

Still, he defended the time and effort of the investigation during an interview with the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette's editorial board Thursday. The grand jury's massive report, issued Aug. 14, did more than just dig up old stories, he said.

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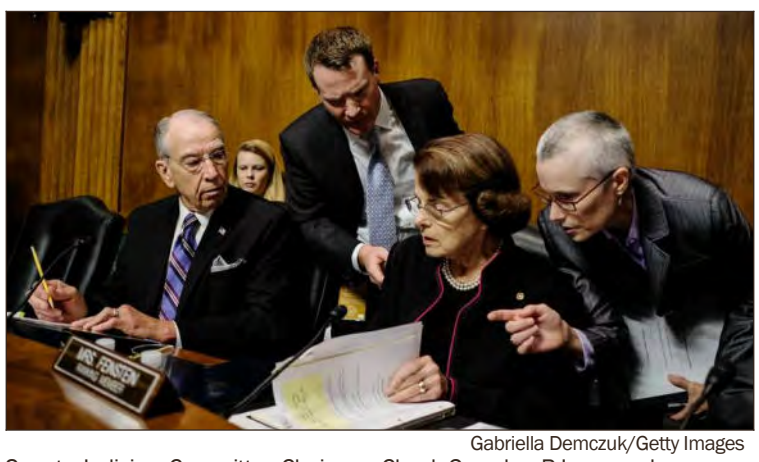
Senate Judiciary Committee to vote Friday on Kavanaugh

The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Republican senators said Thursday evening that the Judiciary Committee plans to vote Friday morning on Judge Brett Kavanaugh's nomination to the Supreme Court.

Sen. John Cornyn of Texas, the second ranking-Republican, had said Thursday that the GOP conference would meet and "see where we are." After the meeting, Republican Sen. Lindsey Graham said, "There will be a vote tomorrow morning."

Judge Kavanaugh and a woman accusing him of sexual assault, California psychology professor Christine Blasey Ford, spent hours testifying Thursday before the Senate Judiciary Committee.



Gabriella Demczuk/Getty Images

Senate Judiciary Committee Chairman Chuck Grassley, R-Iowa, and Dianne Feinstein, D-Calif., talk with aides during testimony Thursday.

In a day like few others in Senate history, Ms. Ford recounted her "100 percent" certainty Thursday that one night in the summer of 1982, a drunken now-Judge Kavanaugh forced her down on a bed, groped her and tried to take off her clothes. President Donald Trump's nominee for the Supreme Court, testifying second, then defiantly said he was "100 percent certain" he did no such thing and said he's never sexually assaulted anyone.

That left senators to decide whether the long day of testimony tipped their confirmation votes for or against Mr. Trump's nominee in a deeply partisan fight with the future of the high court and possibly control of Congress in the balance.

Republicans were seen as showing their own certainty, when they quickly scheduled a recommendation vote for Friday morning in the Judiciary Committee, where they hold an 11-10 majority.

After meeting Thursday night, Republican senators expressed confidence that Judge Kavanaugh would be approved by the Senate Judiciary Committee but acknowledged the outcome would be close.

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Women are making strides in state politics

By Julian Routh
Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

With a wide smile, state Rep. Leanne Krueger-Braneky exclaimed, "This is the future of the Legislature, folks," then posed for a photo with nine women running for office in Western Pennsylvania.

Call it a sign of changing times, for it was just three years ago that Ms. Krueger-Braneky, a Democrat from Delaware County, arrived for her first day on the House floor in Harrisburg and noticed there weren't many women around her.

Now, they're poised to enter the Pennsylvania Legislature in serious numbers.

In races for 203 state House seats on Nov. 6, 31 women likely will prevail — either facing no challenger or another woman — and an additional 62 are running against men, according to a Pittsburgh Post-Gazette review of electoral matchups from Ballotpedia.

That's more women on the

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Exhibit commemorating historic 1969 lunar landing touches down in Pittsburgh

By Dan Majors
Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

The road from the Earth to the moon in 1969 didn't actually run through Pittsburgh, but the vehicle that made the trip there and back had a lot of local help.

And now that vehicle — the Apollo 11 command module Columbia — is the centerpiece of the "Destination Moon" exhibit opening Saturday at the Senator John Heinz History Center in the Strip District.

The exhibit commemorating the 50th anniversary of the lunar landing is part of the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service, taking its display of more than 100 space artifacts to four parts of the country. The Heinz History Center, which is affiliated with the Smithsonian, is the only stop east of the Mississippi.

"We couldn't be prouder," said Andy Masich, president and CEO of the history center. "The moon landing is not just a great moment in American history, but it is one of those milestones in human history."

While some Americans' memories of those space-race days might be as fuzzy as the black-and-white images that were transmitted from the lunar surface on July 20, 1969, the "Destination Moon" exhibit brings the experience back to vivid life, walking visitors through a rocket-gantry-like entrance to a variety of displays of "trials, tragedies and triumph."

Visitors will see the gloves and helmet that astronaut Buzz Aldrin wore during the eight-day mission and a number of star charts, notebooks, flight plans and a survival kit. There's one of the "rock boxes"

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